



The Center on  
Conscience & War

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# The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

## Conscientious Objection: Then and Now

### *Creating A Legacy of Conscience*

Jordan Blevins, Church of the Brethren, CCW Board Treasurer

Churches have never been of one mind when it comes to issues of war and peace. In fact, one of the great debates that has taken place throughout Christian history has been what role Christians should play in military conflicts.

While it is certainly true that members of the Christian faith have participated in armed conflict, the churches have never agreed when it comes to how, when, and whether or not that participation can be considered sinful.

In a paper prepared for its General Assembly in November of 2010, titled "A Christian Understanding of War in an Age of Terror(ism)", the National Council of Churches described the divide this way: "In the wake of World War II, the WCC's First Assembly (Amsterdam 1948) declared that 'War is contrary to the will of God' and the Second Assembly (Evanston 1954) declared that war is 'inherently evil'." These declarations led some delegates to confess their perplexity about how such visionary statements might be acted on in the real world. They maintained that in this real world of violence and military aggression, nonviolent negotiation and peaceful conflict transformation remained an impos-



CCW staff visits Selective Service Oct. 18. Back row from left: Jake Short, Bill Galvin, Maria Santelli, Liz Rekowski, Amanda Roy, Samantha Sheridan, Francois Landrac. Front row from left: Nico Holz, Brendan Agnew *Photo courtesy of Jake Short*



First NSBRO board of directors, 1940s. Back row, from left: M.R. Zigler, Orie O. Miller, Leroy Dakin, Paul Furnas, and Arthur Swift. Front row, from left: Paul Comly French, Harold Row, and Albert Gaeddert. *Photo courtesy of www.gameo.org*

*Legacy, continued on pg. 4*

fully, as the question of conscientious objection to war.

Military conscientious objectors these days face a series of cultural, institutional, and legal hurdles. First, there is the inherent

*Struggle, continued on pg. 5*

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*Founded in 1940, the Center on Conscience & War works to extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors to war. To that end, we*

- Counsel military conscientious objectors.
- Provide legal support for military personnel.
- Monitor Congress to extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors.
- Provide accurate information to the public on Selective Service registration.
- Provide support to COs who refuse to register for the draft through F.E.A.T. student loans.
- Counsel soldiers on the GI Rights Hotline with accuracy and honesty.
- Provide military counter-recruitment information
- Provide workshops, training, and speakers on any of the above topics.

# News Briefs

## Finland

Total conscientious objectors in Finland may soon not have to face prison time under a new law. The law, which goes into effect in November, allows those serving sentences up to six months to qualify for house arrest instead of jail.

In Finland, total COs are those who are opposed to both military and alternative service. Normally they are sentenced to approximately six months in prison for their refusal.

Currently the only alternative service is punitive and COs must serve longer than those who are conscripted into the military.

"This is the first time that an option other than prison is made available to conscientious objectors," said Kaj Raninen of the Union of Conscientious Objectors.

While this is an improvement in the overall treatment of total COs, Raninen said that house arrest does not solve the broader problem of human rights issues concerning conscription in Finland.

[www.yle.fi](http://www.yle.fi)

## Kuwait

Military conscription could be reintroduced in Kuwait after draft legislation was introduced into parliament in August.

Conscription has been suspended since 2001 and there was a failed attempt to reinstate it in 2009.

According to the draft law, men between the ages of 20 and 30 will have to serve at least six months and possibly up to one year in the Army. Students, only sons, and members of the diplomatic corps are exempted. The goal of the legislation is to help meet the Defense Ministry's requirements to defend the country against "external aggression."

*War Resisters' League*

## South Korea

The Constitutional Court in South Korea ruled on Aug. 30 that the right to conscientious objection is not protected under the constitution.

A 7-2 majority agreed that the current conscription laws were constitutional and the only reasons for exemption from military service are physical or mental disabilities.

"The law was established to secure military manpower, share military duty equally and keep national security under the conscription system. So we acknowledge the legislation was proper and does not infringe basic rights," the court said.

The opposing two justices said freedom of conscience and military duty conflict with each other, saying the nation should adopt an alternative military service system.

Those who refuse to perform military service without proper reasons under current law are subject to up to three years in prison.

A majority of conscientious objectors in South Korea are Jehovah's Witnesses.

This ruling comes almost exactly seven years from a previous decision in 2004, which said, "Freedom of conscience is a very important basic right, but an alternative service will be an unreasonable test that can obstruct the very important public interest of national security."

[www.koreatimes.co.kr](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr)

## United Kingdom

The legal battle for Royal Navy medic Michael Lyons' conscientious objector status continued on Oct. 13 with an appeal to the High Court.

Lyons was convicted of "willful disobedience" for refusing to participate in rifle training in Sept. 2010 when he applied for CO status. His appeal to the Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objection was rejected in Dec. 2010, followed by a court-martial with a sentence of seven months detention, reduction in rank, and dismissal from the Royal Navy in July (see *Reporter*, Winter 2010 and Summer 2011).

Now Lyons' appeal to the High Court is arguing that the ruling made by the European Court of Human Rights "that states have a duty to respect individuals' right to conscientious objection to military service" (see *Reporter*, Summer 2011) should warrant another review of his case.

Emma Sangster, coordinator of Forces Watch, said about the case, "The simple injustice of Michael's treatment illustrates how the government and the Ministry of Defence repeatedly fail to recognize conscientious objection in practice. We hope the recent recognition given to those who object on moral grounds to military service by the European Convention on Human Rights will create a change of attitude in the UK armed forces."

Lyons' wife Lillian, said of her husband, who is now detained at the Military Corrective Training Centre at Colchester, "I am so proud of my husband, he is the most compassionate, kind, loving and moral man I have ever known. I agree with everything he has done, and I am appalled by the way the Navy have treated him."

*Forces Watch*

## Meet CCW's Fall Interns from American University

### *Amanda Roy*

I'm Amanda Roy, originally from rural Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, but I live with my family near Reading now. Normally I attend Bucknell University, where I'm a senior studying International Relations. This semester I'm at American University in the Washington Semester Program, where I'm studying foreign policy, doing research on human rights in Cuba and interning here at CCW.

Having taken classes in peace and conflict studies and seeing the toll that war and violent conflict have on human lives and in our society, I wanted to find an internship at an institution that didn't accept war, and helped others to decide what their feelings about war were. I ran across CCW and found it to be a small office where I would be able to work on projects that I cared deeply about and would have an impact.

My main project is to work in the archives, and make all the information we have available in the office accessible to researchers who might be interested. It's been really great, and I've learned a lot about the CO movement around the world and the history of CCW.



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### *François Landrac*

I am François Landrac from Paris, France. I am a student at Audentia Nantes, a school of management in Nantes, western France. I am majoring in Human Resources and will graduate in the summer of 2012.

Currently I'm studying Foreign Policy in the Washington Semester Program at American University. I intern at CCW two days a week, where I help with archiving a variety of data about conscientious objection and the work of the Center.



### *Brendan Agnew*

Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Brendan Agnew is a freshman at American University who began his work at the Center in early September 2011. He intends to major in Journalism with a possible minor in English or Political Science. Coming to D.C., he had hoped to be able to work with a grassroots, non-profit organization, and found that CCW's mission really resonated with him.

Before coming to work at the Center, Brendan was adamantly opposed to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but had never really considered the plight of conscientious objectors or the multiple violations of GI rights that occur on a daily basis. So far, he has enjoyed the opportunity to help out at an organization that does such meaningful work.



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Center on  
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### *Samantha Sheridan*

Samantha Sheridan is an intern for the Center as part of the Washington Semester Program at American University, where she is studying Peace and Conflict Resolution. She is currently a junior at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where she is majoring in Political Science.

Sam gravitated towards CCW when she met Maria Santelli, the Executive Director, at an internship fair, where they discussed the organization's values and activities, as well as the prospects for research, which she enjoys.



She is now working on compiling information on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, as well as researching international organizations, such as War Resisters' International, in order to investigate their views regarding selective objection in the military, all in support of the Military Conscientious Objectors Act (MCOA).

# Selective Conscientious Objection

**Legacy, continued from pg. 1**

sible ideal. While war may be “inherently evil,” it was nonetheless sometimes necessary in their opinion.

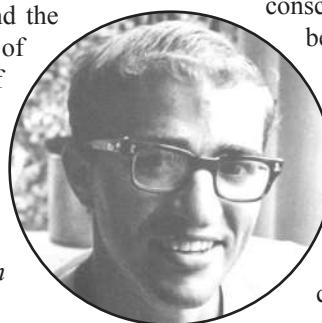
Throughout all of this, however, the church has consistently called on individuals to live out their conscience. Even those who proclaim war to be a necessary evil have a stringent set of guidelines on which to determine the just or unjust nature of a particular war. And the church—through the National Council of Churches—has been consistent in its call on the United States government to allow individual Christians to live out this teaching.

In 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War and the draft in the United States, the National Council of Churches issued a statement called “The Primacy of Conscience,” which contained these words:

*Every encouragement should be given to this moral seriousness among young people, especially when they confront this crucial choice—whether to participate in military action against other people at the nation’s command. Although society has the power to press all its members into military duty, our nation has made room in its conscription laws for the operation of conscience by exempting certain classes of conscientious objectors from military service [...]*

*In respect to the provisions for conscience in the selective service laws, we recommend the following:*

*1. The retention of the provision of non-combatant military service for those conscientiously opposed to full military service and the retention of the provision for alternate civilian service for those who are conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form.*



Vietnam era CO Ted Studebaker.  
Photo courtesy of the Church of the Brethren.

*2. The extension of precisely the same provisions for those who are conscientiously opposed to a particular war, declared or undeclared, that is, to the one which a young person confronts at the time of induction.*

This was especially important in the era of the draft when people were being conscripted. During a time of voluntary enlistment, however, it remains no less true, nor less vital.

Churches have consistently stood against the War in Iraq from its inception. They have also moved to call for an end to the war in Afghanistan as it enters its tenth year. Everyone, and especially persons of faith, must be given the freedom to live out their conscience, and say no when it is violated—whether they be from the Christian pacifist tradition of never enlisting in the armed forces, or from something more like the Just War tradition, when people will fight on behalf of their country, but may oppose particular conflicts. Having the freedom to act on their beliefs is vital to their faith and journey.

However, in the United States, only those opposed to war in any form are entitled to follow their conscience. It is for this reason that the National Council of Churches renewed their call for Selective Conscientious Objection in their 2010 paper, stating, “The NCC/CWS in partnership with member churches and fraternal bodies to make selective conscientious objection a priority for education and advocacy during the next five years followed by a consultation to evaluate and discern next steps for supporting men and women in the armed forces struggling with issues of conscience as they seek to follow the Prince of Peace.”

It is time for the churches to amplify this call, and time for the United States to allow every citizen to live their conscience and their faith.

## What is the Military Conscientious Objector Act?

Nico Holz, Brethren Volunteer

The Center’s mission is to “extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors to war and violence.” One way CCW is extending and defending the rights of conscientious objectors is by supporting the Military Conscientious Objector Act.

To be discharged, conscientious objectors (COs) endure a long process of meetings, interviews, and hearings before the appropriate military branch Secretary approves or denies the claim.

The purpose of the Military Conscientious Objector Act (MCOA) is to discharge COs in the military more efficiently. The current policy is too resource-intensive and lengthy. There is also no statutory right to a CO discharge. It is only part of the military regulations, which can be suspended any time; this happened during the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s.

The goals of the MCOA are:

- To put into law the right to conscientious objection so it cannot be suspended.
- To make one policy for all the different military branches, rather than each branch having slightly different regula-

tions concerning COs. The commanding officer will make the decision for discharge and allow for appeal of a denial; this would bring CO in line with the procedures of most other discharges.

- To allow for selective conscientious objection: Soldiers would have the right to object to fighting in a particular war. This follows the “Just War” principals accepted by a majority of religious and nonreligious groups.

The CO discharge would not be an “easy out,” but it would make the process simpler and faster. It would also give COs more time to write their application, because there have been cases where they have had only a couple of days to write their claim.

The religious freedom and human right of conscientious objection should be honored by the United States. Those in the military should not be prohibited from following their conscience. It endangers other soldiers in combat because conscientious objectors often refuse to fire a weapon and are unwilling to kill the “enemy.”

# Religious Liberty

## Struggle, *continued from pg. 1*

difficulty of asserting a CO claim in the absence of a compulsory draft. Even the most thoughtful and sincere CO applications are often met with undue skepticism by those who simply refuse to believe that voluntary soldiers—like the rest of us—can have a true, profound change of heart, for any number of reasons.

Second, many COs face persistent biases against non-traditional faiths and belief systems. For example, the application of a conscientious objector who self-identified as a Christian, but also found meaning in the non-violent and compassionate teachings of Buddhism, was met with derision and scorn by military officials, who dismissed his blending of Christian and Buddhist beliefs as mere “dabbling” and “outside the norm.”

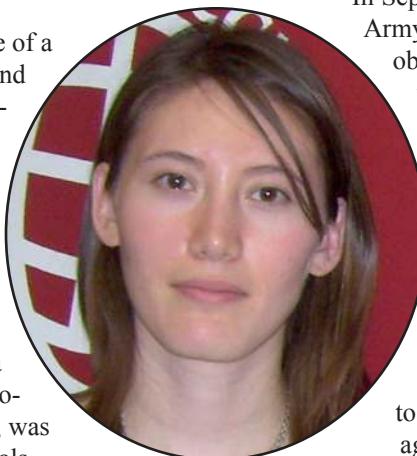
Unfortunately, subsequent appeals to the federal courts—with the support of many, including CCW and the American Civil Liberties Union (both which filed friend-of-the-court briefs in the case)—ultimately fell short.

Third, conscientious objection in the U.S. remains limited by regulation to those who oppose “war in any form.” In other words, Selective Conscientious Objection—opposition to war A, but not war B—is simply unavailable in this country, notwithstanding its deep theological roots and the considerable harm inflicted on selective COs unable to follow their consciences. CCW has participated in a coalition effort to address this problem and expand the legal requirements for conscientious objection, but for now the narrow definition persists.

The news isn’t all bad, however. CCW continues to fight tirelessly for the rights of COs, and has achieved some stunning successes in recent months.

Earlier this year the Air Force finally discharged a woman whom CCW had been assisting for years, through several CO applications, intense investigations, and lengthy hearings.

In the summer the Air Force approved another CO application, this time on behalf of an applicant with an eclectic belief system drawing on a variety of sources, from Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky, to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi. CCW was heavily involved in this effort, working closely with the applicant at every stage of the process and successfully helping to overcome the investigating officer’s initial recommendation to deny the application.



Navy CO India Drew, discharged 2009. CCW file photo



NISBCO Consultative Council meeting in the mid-1970s. From left: Jim Bristol, Signe Wilkinson, Howard Maxwell, and Bill Galvin. CCW file photo

In September, another CCW client prevailed when the Army approved the CO application of a soldier whose objections to war, though not expressly religious in the traditional sense, nonetheless met the necessary CO requirements.

“I value the lives of everyone as if they were my mothers, fathers, sisters, or brothers,” he explained. “I do not agree with everyone on this planet, nor do I care for everyone that I meet. However, I know deep down in my heart that this does not mean these people are invaluable. I believe that even if I feel an immense hatred for someone, it is far better for me to show this person love as opposed to hatred or aggression.”

Despite the many challenges confronting COs, these recent cases offer hope for the rights of religious liberty and conscience in the U.S. military. But those rights can thrive only through the eternal vigilance, and ongoing, dedicated work of organizations like CCW.

*Mr. Mach is Director of the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief, and a former CCW Board member. The views expressed are solely the author's.*



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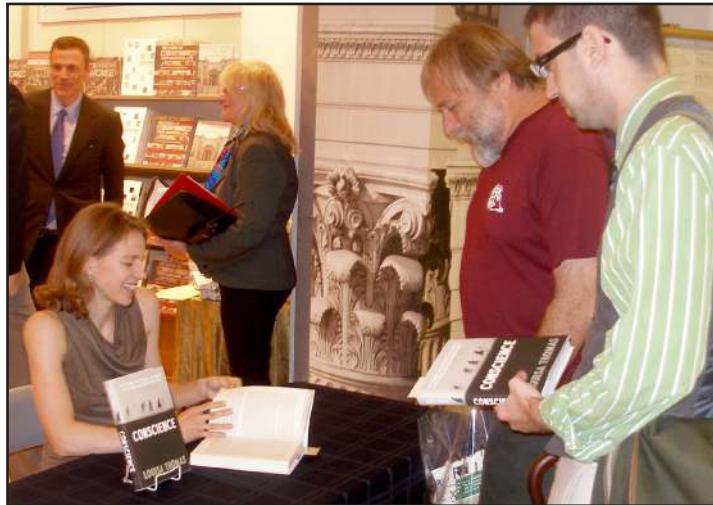
## Book Review: *Conscience: Two Soldiers, Two Pacifists, One Family* by Louisa Thomas

Jake Short, Brethren Volunteer

Conscientious objectors have their predecessors in WWI to thank for the improved treatment and options they receive in the U.S. Louisa Thomas documents the struggle that brought about such changes in *Conscience*.

*Conscience* tells the story of the Thomas brothers: Norman, Ralph, Evan, and Arthur. Born into a strong Presbyterian family, all four attended Princeton at the turn of the Twentieth Century, when the world was in industrial, social, and political upheaval. WWI brought everything to a head, and each brother had a different reaction to the war.

The focus is on Norman Thomas, who was the great-grandfather of the author. A Presbyterian minister influenced by Socialism, he was a student of Woodrow Wilson's at Princeton. He eventually became a pacifist, a founder of the ACLU, and an active member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. His work and ideas put him at odds with many people, but he refused to compromise his beliefs as much as possible.



Bill Galvin and Jake Short have their copies of *Conscience* signed by author Louisa Thomas after her presentation at the National Archives on Sept. 6. *Photo courtesy of Jake Short*

Ralph joined the Army Corps of Engineers and traveled to France, only to be injured and sad to miss the intense fighting the rest of his regiment faced towards the end of WWI.

Evan, influenced by what he saw in the U.K., returned to the U.S. and refused to register. Imprisoned at various Army camps, he was a total objector who suffered being shackled to walls and going through hunger strikes all to champion the rights of individual freedom of conscience.

Arthur, the youngest, was intimidated by the lives of his older brothers, and he decided to join the infant Air Force, but ultimately never saw combat.

*Conscience* weaves an intricate and fascinating story of faith, conscience, politics, and family during a time when the world experienced many rapid changes. Louisa Thomas takes a personal story and makes it universally applicable, demonstrating how four very different brothers can reflect anyone's struggle to do what is right for the sake of their conscience.

## Military Chaplain's Manual Nears Completion

Bill Galvin, Counseling Coordinator

As mentioned in the Fall 2009 issue of the *Reporter*, Bill Galvin has been writing a manual for military chaplains about their role and responsibilities as they deal with conscientious objectors.

The text is essentially finished, and the Center is now working through some church agencies to get the draft text into the hands of some military chaplains for feedback. CCW wants to ensure that the manual is accessible and helpful to military chaplains. So far, the feedback has been positive, and many of the suggested revisions have been constructive and very helpful.

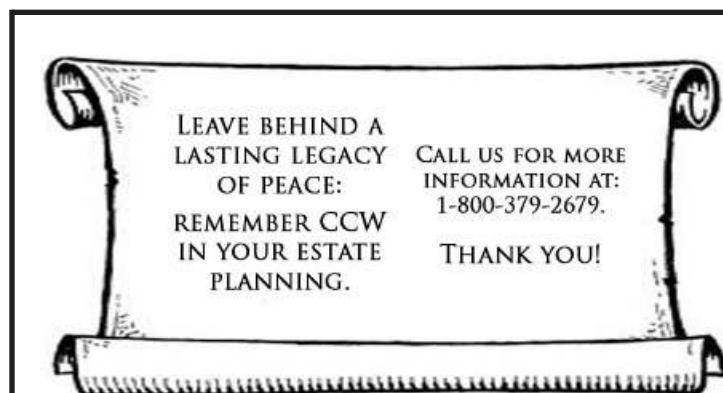
Every faith group that has chaplains in the military must certify that the chaplain is clergy in good standing with their faith tradition, and that he or she has been approved to be a military chaplain by that tradition.

The Center will also be working through some of those chaplain certification agencies to ensure that chaplains are exposed to the manual, and to see how the manual can best be used by the

chaplains.

Once Galvin has had the opportunity to make any changes necessitated by the feedback from military chaplains, CCW will move towards publication.

CCW hopes to announce the finished product soon.



## Medical School Reinforces CO Beliefs in Vietnam Era

Ken Woerthwein  
Religious Society of Friends, Pennsylvania

What allows and leads an individual to become a CO is dependent upon a number of factors that are particular to that individual's life, and many of these factors are time dependent. I believe it is important that I make this statement because, if there ever is a future draft for the military in this country, the amount of time that an individual will have to "make up their mind" will be limited, maybe more limited than it has ever been since WWI or WWII.

I was raised in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago. Although my parents rarely went to church, they always sent their children weekly. I loved listening to the sermons of our minister, and particularly to his sermons from the Gospels, that I would often reread. I was taken in by Jesus' message of love, compassion, forgiveness, and nonviolence. I began to wonder, if this was Jesus' message for us, then why don't we really try to change our lives and live this way. I began to have disagreements with my church's teachings, and I was eventually turned off by our church's insistence on repenting for your sins.

Somewhere in my junior year in high school, I read *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The impact of that book upon me was overwhelming. I thought that, if this is what war is truly all about, then why would anyone agree to participate in it? I began to realize for the first time, in only a very small way, that the glorification of war and patriotism is what made people so willing to go to war.

On my first day of high school, I met a person by the name of Wicky Willmore. We had lockers next to one another and I sat behind her in algebra. We began to date in our junior year, and later married in college in 1963 at the Friends Meeting in Princeton, New Jersey. I had never met another person like her before. Through her mother's teachings and life experiences, Wicky developed this passionate belief in standing up personally for any person who faced discrimination of any type, and she befriended these individuals as well. She opened my eyes to what it meant to make a personal commitment to social justice.

We returned to Chicago in 1964. Shortly thereafter, I concluded that I was a conscientious objector to war. After a period of increasing understanding, I accepted the Quaker belief that "there is that of God in every person", and therefore, if I were to kill another person, I would be killing the image of God. I notified my draft board that, if I was ever drafted, I wished to be considered a CO.

In the summer of 1969, I had two continuous medical student rotations in surgery at the Westside VA hospital. Through her work, Wicky learned of the experiences of returning Vietnam soldiers as they used the VA system. I came into contact with some of them, too. One was a 19 year old soldier who had

been shot through the knee and had been sent to the Westside VA hospital because his wound would not heal. As a student, I was involved in his bedside care. The wound did not look good, was painful and had a foul odor, but the doctors felt that his leg could be saved. One day, he was crying and pleaded with me to take his leg off for his teenage wife would not come near him or visit him because of the terrible smell of the wound. That night I went home, and with tears in my eyes, told Wicky his story.

At that moment, I decided that I could no longer be part of the military if drafted as a doctor. I was being trained to save and heal lives. Once I was in the military, I would be sending young men back to war, not only to be possibly killed and to kill others, but to face a future after the war that was physically and emotionally devastating. I wrote my draft board of my latest decision and how I had reached it. I told them that I could never serve in the military if drafted as a doctor, and that I would go to prison before I would put on a military uniform.

I decided to force my draft board in Berwyn, Illinois, to make a decision about my commitment to be a CO. I had no help or advice from anyone on how to go about becoming a CO, but I was aware of CCCO and had their handbook that described in detail how to apply formally for this designation. I filled out all of the forms, and wrote an essay about the basis for my beliefs and what had occurred in my life to support my beliefs in becoming a CO. I obtained three letters of support for my beliefs and position.

We moved to York, Pennsylvania, in 1970. In late June of 1971, I flew to Chicago and on one weekday evening, I drove to my draft board in Berwyn, Illinois, to make my appearance and present my case. I wore a suit, had made typed copies of my presentation for all members of the draft board, and showed up with a feeling of calmness about me. I had made up my mind that, if they were not going to grant me my CO classification, I was not going to cooperate and they would have to send me to prison, and that is what I eventually told them.

I told them I was not willing to accept any other option than alternative service.

I heard of their decision about two months later. They granted me the CO classification, including the alternative service in York. At the time York was a needy area lacking sufficient health care professionals. Furthermore, since York was far enough away from my designated home, at that time, of Chicago, Illinois, they would allow my alternative service in York to be considered a hardship for me since I would be a long distance from the rest of my family.

Since then, Wicky's and my interest in peace and social justice has continued.

**WHAT IS YOUR STORY?**  
Send us your CO story for possible publication in a future Reporter!



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## ***nota bene...***

The first thing I want to share with you this time is the sincere gratitude we feel for the dedicated work of Jake Short. Jake was a full-time Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) volunteer with us for one year, and his term ended in October. Thank you, Jake, for your overflowing compassion, creativity, and competence. We miss you already.

Following in Jake's footsteps is Liz Rekowski, whose one-year BVS term began in mid-October. Liz's grandfather was a Conscientious Objector who served in the Civilian Public Service during World War II, so Liz's connection to our work has roots in her family's history. Welcome, Liz.

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Recently, CCW staff visited the Selective Service System (SSS) office. We wanted to get an update on how the SSS is maintaining its obligation to serve the conscientious objector community in the event of a draft.

The mission of the Selective Service System is two-fold: to provide personnel to the Department of Defense and to provide alternative service opportunities for COs. We are told there is no hierarchy between the directives, yet the public perception and the public discourse that surrounds the SSS would lead one to believe otherwise. Even in the agency's own publicity materials, images of militarism are dominant.

Why is that?

During our briefing we were told by an SSS representative from its Alternative Service arm that conscientious objectors are some of the "original patriots" and were among those religious freedom-seekers who founded this country. We even learned that conscientious objection was written into the Second Amendment,

until a later edit removed it. Imagine constitutional protection for the rights of conscience!

So how and why did we, as a culture, come to accept the concepts of freedom, service, and patriotism to be so frequently identified with militarism and war? It is especially puzzling when you consider that *the default position for the vast majority of us is that of conscientious objector*: Most of us will never choose to fight in war. Only about seven percent of us are serving or have served in the military. Moreover, studies show that most troops require extensive and specific training to counter the innate human resistance to killing other humans. Conscientious objectors hold a strong majority, yet because we don't speak with one voice in celebration of our position, the fact of our collective objection is muted.

While our history clearly has been shaped by conscientious objection, our present and our future are at risk of being defined by militarism and war. But that will only be so if we allow it. President Kennedy recognized this when he said, "War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today."

It's a tall order to change the culture, but if we keep reminding ourselves and each other that we share our objection to war with so many others, maybe "that distant day" won't seem so far away.

*con pace,*  
*Maria* 

Maria Santelli